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Newsletter Number Eight

Dear Member:

The following is quoted from Professor Jeffery's letter of June 23rd to Edward W. Forbes, announcing his arrival in Cairo:

"It was a most uneventful journey across, with not a single day that had more than a ripple on the water. The boat was comfortably full, but not crowded. Some twenty-five passengers were taking the cruise,--that is, returning to New York on the same ship. The majority of passengers, however, seemed to be disembarking at Beirut. For some of them Beirut was only a landing point from which they would continue their journey. Several were going on from there to Baghdad, and we had one Afghan physician, who had been for a course in Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School, and was on his way home to Kabul. His name was Tāhīrī, so some of your Harvard people may remember him. We wondered how much he could have learned at Harvard for his English was very imperfect, and he conversed with much greater ease in Persian. Maybe it was very naught of us, but we used him to increase our knowledge of Pashto. We lost a few passengers at Marseilles and Naples, and took on a few, among them Mrs. Love with her children and dog, going out to Cairo to join her husband, who is the New York Times representative there.

On board with us was Iris Habib al-Masū, who has been for a year on a

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Fulbright Grant studying in Philadelphia, and now returns home. She gave me some incidental information that suggests that the great find of Coptic Gnostic papyri may be larger than we had been led to think, for she spoke of a collection in the hands of an Italian women, which the Egyptian government is trying to purchase. This will have to be looked into so soon as I have an opportunity, for if it is true it may prove to be something of great importance.

"You will be pleased to know that John Wilson made a great impression here during his year in the country. Already three people have spoken to me about him and his work. Tomorrow we are going over to the Legation to make ourselves known there, and enquire about various things. I have already met two of the Fulbright young ladies who are studying Arabic here, for though the School has officially closed its academic year there are still a number of students taking private lessons with the teachers."

The later report of Professor Jeffery's activities in Cairo gives so detailed a picture of what can be accomplished in the way of liaison and assistance by a resident American scholar in Egypt that it follows unabridged:

"Sunday June 21st. Arrived in Alexandria at daybreak and disembarked after breakfast. There were no landing troubles whatever. I showed Mr. Edward Forbes's letter of accreditation to the Passport authorities and they passed us through without a word. It was a hot and rather dusty day, and the Port as usual very noisy, but everything was so familiar, sights and sounds and smells, dust and flies, that it was like returning home. We had heard on board, by the radio, the news of the rather sudden proclamation of the Republic, which ended a monarchy and a long, long Egyptian tradition of royal rule, and we found a good deal

of excitement about it ashore. There was not much decoration of the city. That is to come later, we learn, when the President Muhammad Naguib, comes on his official visit to Alexandria to accept the homage of its people.

"We were half way through with our Customs formalities when Mr. and Mrs. Beck, from the School of Oriental Studies in Cairo, found us. We should have received word aboard that they were coming down to meet us, but that word had not reached us, and they were late because the Shipping Companies had assured them that we should not land before ten o'clock. However, they saved us from the wearisome train journey, for they had a car, and while Messrs. Thomas Cook took off our baggage to go by rail, they drove us across the desert road, which neither of us had travelled before. All along that road there is mute evidence of war-time activities. We were in Cairo by 5:30 and installed in our new home before supper. We supped with the Becks, but a servant had been engaged for us, and was in attendance, so my wife was able to order what she would want and he will have breakfast ready for us tomorrow.

"The 'Constitution', which had the Schoonovers on board, passed us on the Atlantic, though it was too far off for us to see it. We now learn that Mrs. Schoonover had been unwell and had gone off to Switzerland, catching the boat with her husband aboard when it put in at Naples. So it was Dr. Schoonover who had to get the apartment here in shape for our coming, and he had certainly done a good job, for everything was in excellent order and quite ready for our taking over immediately.

"Monday June 22nd. Those efficient people Messrs. Thomas Cook & Sons had our baggage here shortly after breakfast, so this day has gone in

the wearisome business of unpacking. We had only one disaster. Some heavy piece of baggage must have been thrown violently against the front of one of our trunks for the lock was jammed and could not take the key. Shukri, the plumber for these buildings, was called in and with some fearsome instrument removed the lock altogether.

"We went out to Meadi to supper with the Vandersalls, where we met the Arthur Browns, whom we had known well during the time they were at Union Seminary, and got brought up to date on the local news. We now know more or less who is in town and who is not, and what everybody is doing. Those of you who have lived in these parts know how important that is.

"Tuesday June 23rd. This was a dies non for us, as it was the day of the official proclamation of the Republic in this city, and from early morning there were crowds marching in the streets and great celebrations for this notable event. There were military parades, and parades of innumerable local loyalty groups, and at 6:30 this evening an enormous assembly in what used to be called 'Abdin Square, but is now the Square of the Republic, at which the new President made a formal proclamation and received the plebiscite of the people. All day delegations were coming in from the Provinces, entrance to every place of amusement, etc., was set at half price, special services of thanksgiving were held in mosques and churches and synagogues, and tonight there have been fireworks such as we used to see in the old days.

"It was necessary to purchase postage stamps today, and we discovered a strange situation which is a small indication in its way about the feeling against the deposed monarch. The Post Office at the

Semiramis refused to sell me Air Letters because those they had all bore the image of the monarch, and those which will replace them had not come to hand. When we got ordinary stamps, they were the same as those to which we had been accustomed, but black bars had been stamped across the face of the monarch. I remarked to one of the Sheikhs that we read that it is Allah who will 'blacken faces' on the Last Day, but he replied at once that it is the zalimin whose faces Allah will blacken and this former king was such a zalim that it was right for even Beni Adam to blacken his face.

"To our surprise we were able to meet Sam Morrison and his wife at tea this afternoon. Some of you will remember that he left his work here in Cairo in order to help with the terrific problem of the Arab Refugees from Palestine, where there was great need for helpers who had a good command of spoken Arabic. We had heard that he had had troubles with the authorities and was isolated in Beirut, but it seems that he was given permission to come back to Cairo to settle up his affairs, and as he was having tea with the Becks they very kindly invited us along also. It gave us the chance of hearing his side of the story, which is that at the request of the Refugees themselves he endeavoured to put their point of view before the authorities, but this caused certain groups to raise the charge that he was using his position as a worker among the Refugees to engage in political activities. To those of us who have known him for thirty years it is ridiculous to suggest that he has political designs, but it is also very easy to understand how nervous and ultra-nationalist Government officials could misunderstand what he was doing.

"The fact that Arthur Brown was driving along to the French Institute this morning provided an opportunity to call there and present credentials. Kuentz, however, had already left, and Guéraud went off this morning, so the only one in residence was M. Antoine. We shall not see them now till September.

"Thursday June 25th. The news of our presence here has already got around. This morning a student from Hawaii, C. L. Pang, came in. He is Chinese by race but has never been in China. He got interested in Hawaii in Indian philosophy, but was badly directed and got involved with the Theosophical group. He obtained a scholarship which enabled him to spend a year of study in Benares. Now he is visiting Cairo, Rome, Paris and London, and will cross America to California, where he will get a passage home. He was interested in discussing the state of Indic studies in America, and we were able to give him cards of introduction to five centres in the United States and one in Canada, which he hopes to visit on his way across the country, and where it is to be hoped he will learn that Indic studies in America are on a higher level than the group he had met at some Conference in Hawaii had led him to expect.

"In the course of conversation he raised a very interesting problem. Several Universities in the U.S.A. have apparently been interested in having Indian scholars come as Visiting Professors, and in India itself, he said, there had been considerable discussion over this because in one case and another the man chosen was far from being the man who was considered by his colleagues as the man best qualified for that particular post, but some man who was a pal of that estimable

gentleman in India whom the Universities apparently consult with regard to these appointments. He himself had gained the impression that in America academic appointments are a kind of racket where election to a post depends not on competence but on contact with the right people.

"We called at the American Embassy this morning to register. Mr. Keyes, the Cultural Attaché, was in Committee, but we saw his assistant, Mr. Adam, who took us over to see the Fulbright people in the nearby building where they are very comfortably established. There are only a few odds and ends of their students still around, but they are expecting quite a group out in September. It was when we enquired about Dr. Calverley's case there that we learned that his being put down as an 'alternate' was all a mistake, and that he should have been assured that they had a place all ready for him and even a passage reserved for him in September. This is rather a late date for him to be advised, but we very much hope that he can take it up and be out here with us for the academic year.

"Friday June 26th. Richard Frye from Harvard turned up unexpectedly this afternoon, and we had him stay to supper with us. He had no idea of this trip when we saw him in New York not long before we left, but very suddenly he got a commission to fly to Teheran to look at some lots of Persian (and a few Arabic) MSS which have come on the market. The dollar hunger brought about by President Mossadegh's fiscal policies has apparently brought many interesting things on to the market, including these MSS. Frye was not staying in Cairo save over night, but will probably stop off in Damascus to look into the rumour that a magnificent MS of the Arabic Dioscorides is on the market there.

"Saturday June 27th. Dr. Boutrus 'Abd al-Malik was in this morning with an unexpected request, but one which will doubtless be considered within the interests of the Centre. The Arabic Protestant Church has undertaken to produce a Bible Dictionary. There is an old one, compiled somewhere in the eighteen eighties, which served a useful purpose in its day, but which, of course, is now hopelessly antiquated. Since the Muslims are very busy with their new Arabic Encyclopaedia of Islam, the Protestants have appointed a Committee to prepare a new, up-to-date, scholarly Bible Dictionary in Arabic, and Dr. Boutrus, who is the Chairman of the Committee, came along to ask if I would be a 'consultant' for them, for on many points that will arise they will want to consult someone who may be able to advise them. In all probability the help one can give them will be very limited, but it seemed to be a project which deserved any help the Centre can give.

Wendell Philips of the Foundation for the Study of Man is in town. He presented some token from President Eisenhower to President Muhammad Naguib, and gave a lecture this evening at the Geographical Society on the work of the expedition to the Yemen. It was one of these things arranged at five minutes' notice so we did not get word of it in time to go. The newspapers had a notice that he was considering presenting to the University at Alexandria some two million papyri he had unearthed on his visit to Sinai. This sounds strange, but we shall doubtless hear what it is all about later.

"Sunday June 28th. Tonight was the official Farewell Dinner to Dr. John Badeau who leaves by plane tomorrow for home. He had a Dinner offered him on Friday night by the Minister of Education, at which he was presented

with the insignia of the Order of the Nile, Second Class, in honour of his services to education in Egypt. That was an official affair, however, but tonight was the farewell from his own group here at the American University. It was at the Semiramis Hotel and the price per person was rather steep, but since they gave us the opportunity of sharing, and as we are enjoying the hospitality of the American University this year, we thought that we should attend. It was a very pleasant occasion, where we met a number of old Egyptian friends, and met others of whom we had heard but never met. We have known Dr. Badeau for so many years there was no need of a Dinner for us to say farewell to him, but the Dinner had its place and we are glad we went.

"Monday June 29th. Muhammad Imaduddin from Assam was in this morning. He is on a scholarship and is studying in Cairo, but from here he would like to go on to the U.S.A. for further study. He had interminable questions about where Islamic studies are being cultivated in America, and what could be done in this place and that. He is writing for Catalogues and Announcements and will doubtless be in again to consult about what he finds in them.

"One of the Fulbright men, Mr. Hare, was also in this morning. He goes back to his home in a few weeks when his grant is up, but he wants to have another year away, and is at present contemplating a year in Cambridge, England, where he would work under Arberry. He has several projects in mind, which he wanted to talk over. Since Arberry is a specialist in the area of Sufism, i.e. Islamic mysticism, it seemed to me that by far the best of his projects was that which concerned the Sufi writer as-Sulami. This would be a project on which Arberry would

be interested to work with him, and has the advantage of not only being interesting in itself, but one where he could make a contribution that would be useful to students in other fields.

"My wife went to a reception at the Women's Club this afternoon. There was some Miss Henderson out from America, and the President of the Club had called a meeting of members present in the city to meet her and hear her. As my wife has not yet had time to become a member, she went as the guest of Mrs. Vandersall. It was a good opportunity, however, to meet a good many of the women who are prominent in the work of the Club just now. In the old days the Club was almost exclusively one of American and English women, but now the great majority are Egyptians. Even since we were here in 1947 there has been a noticeable advance in feminine participation in public affairs, but I notice in the papers that the Doctors of Divinity at the Azhar have announced a programme of 'total war' against feminism in the world of Islam. It is going to be rather interesting to watch what will happen during these months that we are to be here.

"Tuesday June 20th. Most of this morning was given to a student 'Ala' ad-Din from Pakistan, who is here on a scholarship from his Government to perfect himself in Arabic and Islamic studies, so that he may take a teaching post when he returns to his own country. He seems to be an earnest fellow, but it is extremely difficult to understand either his English or his Arabic. He is supposed to be working on the problem of the earliest history of Islam in India, and is very anxious to have guidance in his work. Methinks, however, that what he really needs is a private tutor who would sit down with him for some hours every day and

go over his texts with him, show him how to express his problems, and guide him in the solution of them, but that is something beyond anything one could reasonably undertake.

"The other student who was in this morning was a Greek, Economides, who is actually working for Reuters here, but is very anxious to do advanced work in International Relations, and came in to talk over his plans, and to learn what is being done in the Universities of America in this field.

"He has a project on which he has been working for some time, and on which he wanted advice, viz. 'Concepts of the Law of Nations in Early Islam', which he wants to make the basis of a further study on how far modern Muslim States have gone from the early Islamic teaching in their current interpretation of problems of the Law of Nations.

"Madelung called in for a few minutes today. He leaves for Germany tomorrow, but when he heard that we were in town he came along, even though he could have only a few minutes with us. He will visit his people and then in September will take up an academic post under Spitaler in the Oriental Seminar at Munich. You will remember that Bergsträsser had commenced to build up at Munich an Archive of Qur'anic MSS in which he had assembled films of a goodly portion of the oldest extant MSS of the Qur'an in the various collections in the East and the West as well as of works dealing with the Massorah of the Qur'an. Otto Pretzl carried on this work after Bergsträsser's untimely death, and after Pretzl's death Spitaler took charge. Most of it was destroyed when Munich was bombed during the War, but Spitaler has got it started again, and Madelung will now be associated with it. As I have been associated

with that work since Bergsträsser began it, he wanted to see me before he left. He has had a whole year here in Cairo doing special preparation for the work he will be undertaking there, so that the prospect seems hopeful for some revival of interest in Qur'anic studies.

"That reminds me that the day after we arrived, when Sheikh Ahmad 'Abd al-Kaliq came to greet us, I enquired about the 1926 text of the Qur'an which is the one we like to use with students, for it makes an attempt to preserve the Old Kufan orthography and eschew all this modernized orthography you find in most Qur'ans now-a-days. It used to sell for twelve piastres, but in recent years we have been unable to secure copies at all. He said that now the Book Shops were asking four hundred piastres a copy. That is ridiculous situation, so at the Badeau Dinner on Sunday night I made bold to speak for a few minutes with Dr. Tawfiq Yunus, who is in the Ministry of Finance, about the possibility of the Ministry issuing a new printing at a reasonable price. He asked for a Memorandum on the matter, so it may be that something can be done about it."

Yours sincerely,



Eric Schroeder
Executive Secretary